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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 001871

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [SP](#) [MO](#) [AG](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEA A/S BURNS IN MADRID

Classified By: Political Counselor Kathleen Fitzpatrick per 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) NEA A/S William Burns paid a five-hour visit to Madrid May 18, meeting with President Zapatero's new National Security Advisor, Carlos Casajuana, and the new Deputy Foreign Minister, Bernardino Leon. The Spanish expressed a desire to work with the US on such issues as encouraging better relations between Morocco and Algeria, and making progress on the Western Sahara. A/S Burns reviewed US policy on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the public affairs side, A/S Burns was the featured guest at a roundtable for 30 opinion leaders on US Middle East policy at a prominent think tank. He also gave an interview which appeared in Spain's leading daily, El Pais. Press coverage of the visit was favorable. Middle East issues were in the forefront in Madrid during the Burns visit, which coincided with the Israeli Foreign Minister's visit and the Palestinian PM's visit the following day. End Summary.

Casajuana: President Zapatero's Foreign Policy Advisor

12. (C) Carles Casajuana, newly appointed Director for International Affairs for President Zapatero (analogous to National Security Advisor), received A/S Burns at the Moncloa Presidential complex. Casajuana said that despite the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq, the Zapatero government looked forward to cooperation with the US. Casajuana said the USG reaction to the Spanish pullout had been measured and "we had avoided a collapse in relations." Regarding increasing Spain's military forces in Afghanistan, Casajuana said that the issue was under active consideration but that there had been no final decision.

13. (C) Casajuana noted that Israeli FM Shalom would meet with Zapatero that afternoon and that Palestinian PM Qurei would be in Madrid May 20 and would also meet with Zapatero. Casajuana described the Israeli-Palestinian situation as "very bleak." A/S Burns said the US was committed to engaging PM Qurei, as evidenced by Qurei's meetings with the Secretary and NSA Rice in recent days.

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14. (C) Casajuana raised the March 11 Madrid terror attacks on commuter trains. He said it was "astonishing" that Moroccans who, by all appearances, were westernized and doing reasonably well in Spain, would do this. The willingness of seemingly middle class immigrants to engage in such acts was deeply troubling, he said. Casajuana said this "sociological phenomenon" merited intense analysis, but speculated that the terrorist impulse of ostensibly integrated immigrants stems from a deep sense of humiliation. Casajuana noted that many Moroccan immigrants have a positive view of bin Laden. Combating this will be a major challenge.

15. (C) Turning to Iraq, Casajuana said that the UN's Brahimi had a difficult task, indeed "we are asking him for a miracle" to form a caretaker government with legitimacy. Casajuana again turned to the theme of Arab humiliation. The Abu Ghraib prison abuses had intensified existing feelings of Arab humiliation. Casajuana said that "we are extremely concerned" that public opinion in Spain and throughout Europe is so "terrible" regarding the US. Casajuana added, however, that Spain would play a positive, constructive role in the UNSC deliberations on the Iraq resolution.

16. (C) A/S Burns said that the US and Spain could work together on the Maghreb. Casajuana said that Zapatero's April visit to Casablanca had been a success and that Zapatero had made it a top priority to put relations with Morocco "on a different track." Morocco had followed up with a visit by the Interior Minister and the King's advisors to discuss security and counterterrorism issues. Moratinos had already been to Algiers. Casajuana confirmed that press reports on Zapatero's visit had erroneously left the impression that Spain was backing away from the Baker plan. Casajuana said the GOS supported the Baker plan.

17. (C) A/S Burns noted that the US would have the opportunity to engage King Mohammed when he visits Washington in July. Bouteflika will also visit Sea Island for the G-8 Summit in June. Burns noted that Special Envoy Baker remains

actively engaged in mediation efforts between Morocco and Algeria. Casajuaana agreed and said that the US and Spain share the same goal of lessening tensions between Morocco and Algeria and that he looked forward to working together on this.

Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon

18. (C) FM Moratinos was in Brussels during the visit of A/S Burns. In place of Moratinos, Deputy FM Bernardino Leon hosted A/S Burns to a working lunch that included other members of the MFA team involved in Middle East and North African affairs. Leon began the lunch with the Maghreb. He noted that the Zapatero government seeks "equilibrium" in Spanish relations with Morocco and Algeria. The Aznar government, having fallen out with Morocco, favored Algeria. The Zapatero government would seek to build on good relations with Algeria while working to significantly improve relations with Morocco.

19. (C) Leon said there had been no change in the Spanish position on Western Sahara despite media reports to the contrary. The media had picked up on friendly comments Zapatero had made during his Casablanca visit in April and wrongly interpreted this as a change in GOS policy. Leon said that Algeria had also felt that there had been a change in policy and that he has had some "tough conversations" with Algerian counterparts.

110. (C) Leon said that with both Spain and Algeria in the UNSC there might be possibilities for progress on the Western Sahara impasse when the MINURSO mandate comes up once again for renewal in six months. Leon said he looked forward to exchanging ideas with the US on this during the next six months. He suggested that the US, France and Spain might work together on Western Sahara and on improving Algerian-Moroccan relations generally.

111. (C) A/S Burns said the USG welcomed the opportunity to work together with Spain in mending relations between Morocco and Algeria, and in making progress on Western Sahara. A/S Burns reiterated that both King Mohammed and President Bouteflika would be in the US in the next few months, offering opportunities for engagement on this issue.

112. (C) On Libya, Leon said that he would likely visit there in the coming weeks. Spain would continue to support Libya's renunciation of terrorism and WMD and its reintegration into the international community. Leon said that Zapatero would not go to Libya any time soon, but that eventually he would be willing to travel there, as Aznar had done. On Tunisia, Leon said that some repressive tactics by the government against the press were "of concern." Leon noted that it was paradoxical that the Tunisian government would be heavy handed regarding freedom of speech given Tunisia's relative prosperity and good record on other rights issues.

113. (C) Turning to Israeli-Palestinian issues, Leon asked what topped the list of what the Palestinians need to deliver. A/S Burns stressed the need, as outlined in the roadmap, for unity of Palestinian security forces and for cracking down on terrorists. Leon said that Moratinos did not want to travel to the Middle East anytime soon. Moratinos is interested in moving away from the label of being Middle East focused. He doesn't know Latin America, for example, and has to get smart on those issues. Thus, Leon indicated he (Leon) would be the one focusing most closely on the Middle East for MFA and that he would "protect Miguel (Moratinos) for a while." Leon said he had recently met with Arafat; he and Burns differed on the appropriate role for Arafat, as the U.S. continues to make clear that Arafat is not a viable partner.

114. (C) Leon stressed his interest in working with A/S Burns and the USG on these issues. He said that EU budget support was critical for Arafat and the EU would use it as a lever. If Israel withdraws completely from Gaza, the EU would pressure Arafat to make concessions, Leon said.

115. (C) Moving to Syria, Leon confirmed that Bashir Assad was likely to visit around June 1-2. Leon said he would go to Damascus before Assad's visit to push for a serious agenda for the trip. He said that if there was something the US wanted Spain to convey, "let us know."

116. (C) On a new UNSCR for Iraq, Leon said that we agree on the "main lines." The Spanish side believes that "positions seem to be converging" and that there is widening consensus among EU partners. Leon said Spain would play a constructive role in the UNSC on this issue and would not work on parallel tracks. A/S Burns noted that the Russian idea for two resolutions had not caught fire with anyone. Leon said Spain was still examining the idea.

117. (C) Burns noted our continued desire for reform in the

Middle East, and said that he hoped the Arab League summit (which Tunisian President Ben Ali had told him would be held) would endorse regional reform. This remains an important project, which should focus on concrete steps and problems. Leon agreed, adding that Spain appreciated that the initiative would not supercede the Barcelona process; Burns noted the need for continued complementarity and said that the initiative was not meant to overtake other processes.

Public Affairs

118. (C) A/S Burns had an on-the-record roundtable at the FRIDE think tank during his visit. FRIDE has associations with FM Moratinos and the Socialist party. In attendance were 30 prominent opinion leaders. In addition, A/S Burns gave an interview to leading daily El Pais. El Pais ran a favorable story about his visit on May 19, as did the conservative daily, ABC.

Comment

119. (C) Casajuana and Leon were cordial and cooperative in their meetings with A/S Burns, as they have been in other early encounters we have had since they assumed office in April. Despite the strong criticism of the US from the Socialist party, foreign policy interlocutors in the Zapatero government continue to express the desire to work closely with us. Political optics are, however, paramount to Zapatero and his inner circle. Regardless of the goodwill expressed by our foreign policy interlocutors, their room for maneuver is limited by the political considerations that are paramount right now in the Socialist government's strategy.

120. (U) NEA has cleared this message.
ARGYROS